

**Political Science 130:  
Comparative Political Institutions**

**Instructor:  
David Fortunato**

Fall 2014  
Meetings: T & R  
SSM 104  
4:30 - 5:45pm

Office Hours: T & R  
SSM 208B  
3:00–4:15p  
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**Course Description:**

This class will take students through the design, maintenance, and evolution of institutions of all kinds ranging from legislatures and central banks to labor unions, to simple behavioral norms. We will discuss the problems that these institutions have been created to solve, why institutions take the shape that they do, and how altering the rules of the game can tailor behaviors. By the end of the course, students should be able to understand cross-national variation in areas as diverse as political knowledge, central bank interest rates, or even the quality of European football teams through the analysis of formal rules and informal norms.

**Requirements and Expectations:**

Students are expected to attend seminar and complete all of the readings. The assigned materials must be read before class on the date listed in the syllabus (the readings are often quite difficult, so budget your time appropriately). Seminar will be a mixture of lecture, student presentations, and discussion and will be based on the assumption that students have completed the reading for that day and are able to analyze the content. Please note that 10% of the grade is based on participation in class discussion and 30% is based on in-class presentations.

**General Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for Political Science:**

1. An understanding of the processes, theories, and empirical regularities of political institutions and political behavior in the students chosen emphasis area: American politics, comparative politics, or international relations.
2. An ability to employ critical thinking and demonstrate social scientific literacy, including basic quantitative literacy.
3. A capacity to utilize contemporary social science research methods to conduct rigorous research on political phenomena.

4. Effective written communication skills, especially the ability to convey complex concepts and information in a clear and concise manner.
5. An ability to apply abstract theory and research methods to understand contemporary political events and public policies.

**Intended Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):**

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Communicate a thorough theoretical understanding of the structure and operation of political institutions (corresponds to PLOs 1 and 4, listed above).
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the central questions, theories, approaches, and findings in regards to collective action problems and the management of common pool resources (corresponds to PLO 1).
3. Comprehend and critique contemporary political science research on institutional design and analysis (corresponds to PLO 2).
4. Conduct basic but rigorous social science research on formal rules and behavioral norms (corresponds to PLOs 3 and 4).

**Evaluation:**

Grades will be based on four components.

- Seminar Participation: 10%
- Presentations: 30%
- Midterm Exam: 30%
- Final Exam: 30%

In each session one or more students will make a presentation on the readings assigned for that day. Those students will be selected in advance at random. Before the main presentation, one student will be selected at random to give a one-minute summary of the reading. These selections will occur in real time (selection → summary). These advance notice and pop presentations will determine 30% of the final grade.

On Tuesday, October 13, students will make individual presentations of a formal rule or set of rules of their choosing. Details will be distributed two weeks prior.

**Honor:**

Exams are to be completed individually with no outside help. Please refer to the Academic Honesty Policy here: <http://studentlife.ucmerced.edu/what-we-do/student-judicial-affairs/academicy-honesty-policy>

**Books:**

The following texts are required reading. I have no preference over how the students acquire the books. They can be found used at a substantial savings and many of these books are assigned in other courses, so it is quite possible that these may be borrowed/purchased from other students.

- John H. Aldrich. 1995. *Why Parties?: The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* University of Chicago Press
- Arend Lijphart. 1999. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. Yale University Press
- Elinor Ostrom. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Princeton University Press
- Brian Skyrms. 1996. *The Stag Hunt and the Evolution of Social Structure*. Cambridge University Press

**Course Outline:****Thursday, August 27**

Introduction

**Tuesday, September 1:**

NO CLASS (APSA)

**Thursday, September 3:**

NO CLASS (APSA)

**Tuesday, September 8:**

Coase, Ronald. 1960. "The Problem of Social Cost". *Journal of Law and Economics* 3: 1-44.

**Thursday, September 10:**

Greif, Avner, Paul Milgrom and Barry R. Weingast. 1994. "Coordination, Commitment, and Enforcement: The Case of the Merchant Guild." *Journal of Political Economy* 5: 745-776.

Milgrom, Paul R., Douglass C. North, and Barry R. Weingast. 1990. "The Role of Institutions in the Revival of Trade: The Law Merchant, Private Judges, and the Champagne Fairs." *Economics and Politics* 2: 1-23.

**Tuesday, September 15:**

McCubbins, Mathew D. and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols Versus Fire Alarms." *American Journal of Political Science* 28: 165-179.

Clinton, Joshua D., David E. Lewis, and Jennifer L. Selin 2014. "Influencing the Bureaucracy: The Irony of Congressional Oversight." *American Journal of Political Science* 58:387-401.

**Thursday, September 17:**

Skyrms: Part 1

**Tuesday, September 22:**

Skyrms: Part 2

**Thursday, September 24:**

Skyrms: Part 3

**Tuesday, September 29:**

Ostrom: Chapters Preface, 1, and 2

**Thursday, October 1:**

Ostrom: Chapters 3 and 4

**Tuesday, October 6:**

Ostrom: Chapters 5 and 6

Exam review, guidelines, and distribution

**Thursday, October 8:**

NO CLASS

**Monday, October 12:**

Exam due by 11:59pm. Any submission dated 10/13 or after will not be accepted. Seriously.

**Tuesday, October 13:**

Presentations

**Thursday, October 15:**

The grad school talk, exam discussion, any remaining presentations.

**Tuesday, October 20:**

*These are the most difficult readings of the course, please budget time accordingly.*

McKelvey, Richard D. 1976. "Intransitivities in Multidimensional Voting Models and Some Implications for Agenda Control", *Journal of Economic Theory* 12: 472-482.

Shepsle, Kenneth. 1979. "Institutional arrangements and equilibrium in multidimensional voting models." *American Journal of Political Science*, 23: 27-59.

**Thursday, October 22:**

Aldrich: Part 1

**Tuesday, October 27:**

Aldrich: Part 2

**Thursday, October 29:**

Aldrich: Part 3 and 4

**Tuesday, November 3:**

Lijphart: Part 2, 3, 5

**Thursday, November 5:**

Lijphart: Part 6, 7, and 8

**Tuesday, November 10:**

Lijphart: Part 10, 11, 12, and 13

**Thursday, November 12:**

Nordhaus, William D. 1975. "The political business cycle." *Review of Economic Studies* pp. 169-190.

MacRae, C Duncan. 1977. "A political model of the business cycle." *Journal of Political Economy* 239-263.

**Tuesday, November 17:**

Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle. 1990. "Coalitions and Cabinet Government." *American Political Science Review*, 84: 873-890.

Strøm, Kaare, Ian Budge, and Michael Laver. 1994. "Constraints on Government Formation in Parliamentary Democracies." *American Journal of Political Science*, 38: 303-35.

**Thursday, November 19:**

Martin, Lanny W., and Randolph T. Stevenson. 2010. "The Conditional Impact of Incumbency on Government Formation." *American Political Science Review* 104: 503-18.

Garrett Glasgow, Matt Golder, and Sona Golder. 2011. "Who 'Wins'? Determining the Party of the Prime Minister." *American Journal of Political Science* 55: 937-954.

**Tuesday, November 24:**

Druckman, James N. and Michael Thies. 2002. "The Importance of Concurrence: The Impact of Bicameralism on Government Formation and Duration." *American Journal of Political Science*, 46: 760-771.

Druckman, James N., Lanny W. Martin, and Michael F. Thies. 2005. "Influence without Confidence: Upper Chambers and Government Formation." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 30: 529-48.

**Thursday, November 26:**

No class (Thanksgiving)

**Tuesday, December 1:**

Thies, Michael F. 2001. "Keeping Tabs on Partners: The Logic of Delegation in Coalition Governments." *American Journal of Political Science* 45: 580-98.

Carroll, Royce and Gary W. Cox. 2012. "Shadowing Ministers: Monitoring Partners in Coalition Governments", *Comparative Political Studies* 45.

**Thursday, December 3:**

Martin, Lanny W., and Georg Vanberg. 2005. "Coalition Policymaking and Legislative Review." *American Political Science Review* 99: 93-106.

Martin, Lanny W., and Georg Vanberg. 2008. "Coalition Government and Political Communication." *Political Research Quarterly* 61: 502-516.

**Tuesday, December 8:**

Final exam review (student directed)

Final exam distributed (take home, open book/note, 4 hours)

**Thursday, December 10:**

No meeting

**Sunday, December 13:**

Final exam due no later than 10pm PST